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STATINTL

NORMAN ROSS SAYS

The Silent Ones Gain Their Fame

BY NORMAN ROSS

WIDESPREAD FAME and notoriety, seem these days to be the reward of people who talk too much.

Pette Davis and Gary Merrill do a reading of some of the great Sandburg works, and as an epilogue, Mr. Sandburg himself talks aimlessly and endlessly.

If anybody sticks a microphone in front of Harry S. Truman, peppery and likable old gent though he is, he pours a few thousand pungent and often ill-considered words into it.

Isn't it about time that we pay a small tribute to some of the men who know when to shut up? I have several candidates in mind.

1. The RB-47 pilots and their families. At his first TV press conference, President Kennedy commended them for the "restraint" with which they have all acted during their ordeal. As he said, what they did was in the finest tradition of our military services.

I don't know if he had this in mind, but I couldn't help think as he spoke, of the contrast provided by the rather craven way Gary Francis Powers and his family went crawling to Khrushchev under a somewhat similar circumstance.

There was even a particularly revolting rock-and-roll ditty (I won't call it a song; Schubert composed songs) begging Nik to "set our Gary free."

The RB-47 boys and their wives and families kept their mouths shut, and we honor them.

2. FROM THE MOMENT he admitted election defeat, Richard Nixon has shown extraordinary restraint that goes well beyond what could reasonably be expected of a "good loser."

I would guess he definitely feels he won that election but was counted out by vote frauds in big cities controlled by Democratic machines.

But an electoral system still ridiculously geared to the exigencies of 18th Century communications and transportation has already elongated our electoral process close to the point of danger.

Rather than prolong the uncertainty for additional months, Nixon accepted the count with grace and good humor, knowing he will live to fight another day.



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3. TO MY MIND, the one man who really has known best when to maintain a dignified silence has been Douglas MacArthur. I thought of this again two days ago when he reached his 81st birthday.

If ever there was a man who could legitimately feel he had a grievance, it was MacArthur after the particularly humiliating way in which he was fired by ex-President Truman.

He could have stumped the country for years, complaining, justifying, viewing with alarm. Instead, he has held his counsel, except when faced with a remark like this from Truman: "Yes, MacArthur wanted to bomb (Communist) China and Eastern Russia and everything else."

As MacArthur announced, from the Olympian heights of the Waldorf Towers, the charge was "completely false."

Much as I admire MacArthur, I happen to feel we were right not to entrust him with the presidency. I still remember the bitter servicemen's remark that when he made good on his "I shall return" pledge to the Philippines, he wouldn't wade ashore, but would walk across the waters.

But I admire him for the immensity of his contribution to our country, and, too, for his old-fashioned ability to keep his mouth shut and let his record stand. Sunday morning quarterbacking might feed the headlines and the ego, but the man who indulges in it is, somehow, a lesser man.

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